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ABSTRACT

A "cultural and informational exchange" between two Maryland middle schools allowed two groups of gifted students to accomplish several learning objectives while discovering new regions of their state and nurturing new acquaintances. Computers were central to the program--all information was created using word processing programs, and was transmitted between the two schools by modem. First, students were surveyed and paired for their desire to share information about the geography and history unique to their counties. For both groups of students, the information exchange would provide an important component of their gifted and talented education--an audience for their work other than their teachers. Next, students spent many hours looking through reference materials, interviewing county residents, and compiling reports on topics such as the Alsatia Mummers' Parade or Fort Frederick. Having learned about their partners' geographic and historical heritage, students were surveyed and matched for personal characteristics and interests, and participated in a pen pal exchange. As a culminating activity at the end of the school year, one school hosted the other on an overnight recreational trip. (Several sample student reports are attached.) (ARH)

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AN INFORMATION AND "CULTURAL" EXCHANGE BETWEEN TWO MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Vicki E. Baer, Ph.D.

Paper presented at Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association Conference, November 1987

Twenty-five tired and happy students from the Eastern Shore boarded their bus home amid waves and shouts from their new-found friends from Western Maryland. They had spent two days seeing the sites and meeting the people they had been reading about since early in the school year during a unique "cultural exchange". By using a word processing program and a modem, two groups of students learned about parts of their state many had never visited. They also nurtured acquaintances with peers whose lifestyles are very different from their own.

The idea for the exchange came when the computer instruction coordinator from Washington County met with the media supervisor of St. Mary's County during a computer workshop. The two administrators shared a common asset--networked computer lab sites in one of their counties' middle schools. Both wanted to see their labs used for applications broader than simple classroom instruction, and both wanted their sites' students to get acquainted. By meeting's end, both agreed to share their ideas with some teachers and principals and to arrange for a meeting to discuss project plans.

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The two administrators brought the sites' computer coordinators, teachers of talented and gifted students, and principals to a meeting in which two types of exchange were planned: geographic/historical information and personal data. At Boonsboro Middle School in Washington County, gifted and talented students were grouped together in subject-area classes, so the social studies teacher would direct the information exchange, and the language arts teacher would direct the personal data exchange. At Spring Ridge Middle School in St. Mary's County, talented and gifted students participated in a pull-out program, so one teacher would direct both activities. Twenty-five students from each site would be involved in each segment of the project. All information would be created using the sites' word processing programs; it would be transmitted between the two schools by modem. At the end of the school year, the participating students would meet each other in a culminating activity.

First, the sites' computer coordinators developed an interest survey to match students with similar research interests. Once the surveys were exchanged, students were paired for their desire to share information about geographic characteristics, historical events, historical

figures, historical landmarks, industries, careers, or community activities unique to their counties.

For both groups of students, the information exchange would provide an important component for their gifted and talented education--an audience for their work other than their teachers. For the Washington County students, their informational reports would also be bound into a booklet to be distributed through the local Chamber of Commerce and to county fifth-grade students, who study their county as part of their social studies curriculum.

The students' social studies and pull-out program teachers provided class time for information-gathering, computer lab time for composing and editing, and general guidelines for the final report's format. The computer lab coordinators provided the students with technical assistance for word processing program operations, for appending the final reports into one large file for transfer, and for the actual file transfer via modem.

Eager to share facts about their home counties, the students spent many hours scouring reference materials, interviewing county residents, and compiling reports, all the while

feeling proud that they were educating distant neighbors about their counties. The word processing program allowed students to edit and revise their reports numerous times before transmission without the tedious recopying letter-writing would require. Students seemed quite satisfied with their completed reports, happy to share their efforts with classmates and teachers.

The sites' computer coordinators agreed on a day, and the students watched as their reports were first appended together to save computer memory, exchanged byte by byte via modem, then printed in "hard copy" form. Students returned to their classrooms where they and their teachers shared their partners' reports. St. Mary's County students read about such diverse topics as the Alsatia Mummers' Parade, East of Boonsboro, Fort Frederick, and Jonathan Hager. Washington County students, meanwhile, learned about oyster farming, Fox and Smith islands, and life on the Chesapeake Bay.

Having learned about their partners' geographic and historical heritage, computer coordinators again matched survey information for participating students, this time for personal characteristics and interests. For the remainder

of the exchange period, students wrote letters to their partners describing their appearances, best and worst aspect of school, friends, special events, extra-curricular activities, and dreams for the future. All the students created pseudonyms so their identities would not be known until they met in person.

Participation in the pen pal exchange meant lots of informal composition practice, an audience of peers rather than a teacher, and, for the Washington County students, fulfillment of the letter-writing component of their language arts requirements.

For this second exchange activity, the language arts and pull-out program teachers provided class time for students to read their exchange letters and to share the personal information they were receiving. The teachers also provided computer lab time for students to compose and edit their responses. Computer lab coordinators again facilitated data transfer by appending all the letters into one large file, then transmitting the file via modem. Students were able to exchange four letters each by the end of the school year.

In one of their exchanges, a Washington County student "Squirt" explained to her penpal:

"I like to play video games and board games. If I sound boring I am not, I'm a real party animal, or so my friends say. I go nuts at parties, I have water battles, put ice cream down people's clothes, and I just love to SCREAM!" Her St. Mary's penpal "Always Eating" shared an upcoming event: "Guess what! My Mom is supposed to have a baby today and with all due respect IT BETTER BE A BOY! Even though everyone else wants it to be a girl." By the end of the exchange period, most students were anxious to meet their long-distance friends.

The St. Mary's County bus arrived in Washington County at lunchtime on a beautiful, sunny day in mid-May. After orientation to the days' activities and a meal at the nearby outdoor school (a school-supported "wilderness" learning center where the students would spend the night), the students were escorted to a large project room where their Western Maryland counterparts were waiting. At first, students remained with their own groups, staying on either side of the room. Then, with the help of an encouraging teacher, students began exchanging pseudonyms, introducing themselves, and reminding each other of remarks made in recent letters. As mingling progressed,

within a few minutes it was hard to tell which students came from which county.

For the next couple of hours, the students took a walking tour of the C & O Canal, sharing mutual interest in the stories behind the sites and mutual impatience with insects and humidity. Later in the afternoon everyone gathered for a cookout, more socializing, singing, storytelling, and games. Many students weren't ready to say goodnight by dark when the Washington County students returned to their homes.

On the second day, St. Mary's students toured Washington County, marveling at the green mountains and visiting sites they had read about such as the Antietam Battlefield, the Maryland Theater, and Crystal Grottoes Caverns. They stopped at the host school to have lunch with their penpals. Students shared jokes about school food as they munched on the day's fare and even returned for seconds.

After lunch the students gathered outside for volleyball games, picture taking, and last-minute mingling. By the time the St. Mary's students had boarded their bus and were waving goodbye for their return home, some students had exchanged addresses and had made plans to write during the summer. All agreed that St. Mary's would host

Washington County students next year to continue a very successful exchange activity.

By getting to know their neighbors during the school year, these students participated in expository and descriptive writing activities which encompassed both social studies and language arts learning objectives (But don't tell them!). With peers as an audience, students felt freer to commit their thoughts to paper, more responsible for the historic information they recounted. They also learned that a word processing program is an efficient writing tool and that data can be relayed quickly by modem for immediate consumption. Teachers have already begun planning for next year's exchange, and students are already looking forward to it.

NOTE about author: During the exchange period, Dr. Baer was the computer coordinator at the Washington County site, Boonsboro Middle School. She is now Director of the Learning Resource Center for the College of Education at New Mexico State University.

Places and Events of Interest in Washington County

The Alsatia Club and the Alsatia Mummers Parade

by

Joanie Deatrich

The Alsatia Club, located in Hagerstown, Maryland is seventy-five years old, and for sixty-two years it has performed a community affair for the public, the Alsatia Mummers Parade.

According to the club's legend, a group of eleven teenage boys used to hang out in the drug store of D.C. Aughinbaugh, which was located on the site of the McCrory Store, on West Washington Street, Hagerstown. Many times these boys caused Aughinbaugh headaches and bad times. He didn't want to just kick them out of the drug store and since he had an empty room on the second floor of the building, Aughinbaugh suggested that these boys should take this room and form a club. The boys met in the Public Library in Hagerstown on March 13, 1911 and talked about the proposal of Mr. Aughinbaugh and decided to accept his offer. That was the beginning of the Alsatia Club.

After taking over the room, the boys had to think of a name for their club. The name they decided on was "The Alsatia Club." The teenagers also thought their club should have a motto. The boys dug and dug and finally found a Latin saying which was "Ne Cede Malis Sed Contra," translated into English, "Yield not to adversity but oppose it." The Alsatia Club colors would be blue and white and the club insignia would be the inverted triangle, with the letters A and C intersecting inside the triangle.

They had to furnish the club room and they were not rich so they had to find a store that would give them enough furniture to fill their room. David Horner was the victim. Some of the furniture is still there according to a newspaper article in 1972.

More people became members and the space became cramped in their one room. Half of the second floor in the Colonial Theatre was available, so they moved to their new quarters in December 1915. The Alsatia Club incorporated in 1916. The Alsatia Club's present headquarters is at 141 West Washington Street and it was purchased in February 1924 from Dr. J. McPherson Scott. Finally in May 1924 after hard work and remodeling the members moved into their new club building.

According to John Fiery, an Alsatia member since the first year (1911), the original idea for the Alsatia Mummers Parade came from a man named Lynn Worthington in 1920. As the story goes, Lynn was walking down the street wearing his best suit and he was on his way to meet a friend. It was Halloween and some pranksters grabbed him and threw paint on his suit. He was really mad so he suggested that the Alsatia Club think of some activity that would keep people busy on Halloween to prevent all of these little pranks. Alsatian, Lynn Forthman suggested there be some sort of a celebration

or parade on Halloween Night. It would attract people to the event and cut down on some of the pranks and damages. It was decided to do a mummers parade and Lynn Forthman, being the one who originally suggested the idea, was the first chairman of the parade staff.

The Alsatia Mummers Parade in 1920 was not very well organized but the public seemed to like it and they suggested it be made an annual event. In the earlier years the Alsatians carried torches for light along the parade route.

The first year the finances for the parade came out of the Alsatians' pockets. Year after year the parade became bigger and better and the members alone couldn't handle the expenses. The club began to seek monetary help from the public and also the city and county. They responded and that enabled the parade to expand. Now this parade is the largest event held in the tri-state area. It attracts thousands of participants and is ranked with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and other main events of the Eastern United States. It is not unusual to have 100,000 or more spectators at this parade.

To give the watchers a better view of the parade, bleachers are set up at Bester Elementary School. These provide thousands of seats to control the mass of people and are a means of financing the parade.

In the early 70's the idea of an advertising tabloid began. This is another source of money to help pay for the cost of the parade.

This parade is judged and money prizes are awarded. Bands, floats, Drum Corps, and organized groups are among the best that participate in the parade.

Some new features have been added over the years. For awhile Miss America was a special guest but it became too expensive and had to be stopped. Then the club thought of having Miss Maryland and the eight high school princesses. This is still in practice today. These eight girls ride in the parade. The night before the parade, the Queen of the Alsatia Mummers Parade is chosen at the Coronation Ball from the eight princesses. It's a great honor to be the Queen of the Alsatia Mummers Parade.

In 1985 the Washington County Tourism Office became interested in helping the Alsatia Mummers Parade. They wanted to make the parade festival a weekend event. The night before the parade was expanded to include a Coronation Ball where the parade queen was crowned. Also, a celebrity luncheon was held Saturday at noon and the parade itself star ed that evening. Then on Sunday a craft show was held. This is a fundraiser for the Alsatia Club.

The parade is always held on the Saturday night nearest to Halloween because school bands can participate better on the weekend.

The parade has been held every year since 1920 except for the World War II years from 1941 to 1945. The club lost too many members to the services and could not put the parade together. The club was active in all war programs and

activities and loaned their club building to the war effort.

It has always been the policy of the Alsatia club to help all worthy charities as much as they possibly can. They help the needy a lot and around Christmas they help gather toys for children.

The Alsatia Club puts this great parade together for the people of the Tri-state area as well as many participants and spectators from far and wide. We can all enjoy, in some manner, young and old alike, the fine tradition started by the Alsatia club in 1920.

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Antietam Battlefield
by
Dennis R. Smith II

In 1890 Antietam was turned into a National Battlefield. Soldiers had fought on these lands during both the American Revolution and the Civil War.

Before the wars the Catawba and the Delaware Indians roamed the lands. They hunted, raided, and fought in and around Antietam. Slowly settlers by the names of Chapline, Orndorff, Smith, Piper, and Mumma came to the Valley of Antietam. They cleared the forests and built homes, farms, churches, and mills.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century the "Great Awakening" went through America. Along the banks of the Antietam at the Geeting Meeting House, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, the first American- born denomination, came into being.

If you visit the Antietam Battlefield today you can tour the Dunker Church, the Sherrick farm, and the Antietam Creek. The Antietam Creek (which is in Antietam) rises in Pennsylvania and runs down the Great Valley, through Hagerstown, and enters the Potomac at the village of Antietam. It is noted for its great bridges, fourteen of which were built before 1863. The Civil War Battle of Antietam was named for the stream, which flows past Sharpsburg where the battle took place.

The Dunker Church was destroyed during a storm in 1921, but the bricks and other materials from the church were saved and from them the Dunker Church was reconstructed on the old foundation in 1962. Today it looks unchanged from its Civil War appearance. A plaque at the foundation placed prior to reconstruction said "During the battle the wounded of both armies sought and found sanctuary within its walls.The church was seriously injured by the fire of Union batteries."

The Sherrick farm lies within the boundaries of the Antietam National Battlefield Site. The barn was destroyed but the house and at least one of the outbuildings remain unchanged. Mr. Sherrick, at the beginning of the Antietam battle, hid three thousand dollars in gold in a stone wall in his yard and then fled with his wife. After he fled, the battle raged all around his home and barn. Many wounded Union soldiers were lodged at the house and barn during the battle. Mr.Sherrick came back after the battle and recovered his money. He then moved to nearby Boonsboro. His house was given to a Samuel Mumma, whose home was destroyed. Mr.Sherrick allowed his family to live there until their house was rebuilt.

Many presidents have spoken at Antietam, such as Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, William B. McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Other presidents have toured at Antietam, such as Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy.

Many books have been written about the Antietam

Battlefield including "Drums Along the Antietam "by John W. Schildt,"Antietam ;The Photographic Legacy of Americas Bloodiest Day"by William A. Frassanito,"Antietam Echoes "by John W. Schildt,and "The Sharpsburg Echo"also by John W. Schildt.There are also topography books that mention Antietam such as "Maryland A to Z"by Marion J. Kaminkow.

This year Antietam celebrated their second annual "Civil War Christmas"with a festive party.Residents dressed up in costumes from the Civil War period .and decorated the visitation center.It was decorated just as it would have been during the 1860's.A tree was decorated with string popcorn,and homemade ornaments.The festivity was held on Sunday December 21.Two movies were presented called "A Civil War Christmas"and "A Soldiers Christmas".

Antietam was the first battlefield in American History to be covered by cameramen before they buried the dead.Many of these pictures are still seen in pamphlets and books.

Antietam Battlefield is a national treasure that Maryland can be proud of.It provides us with a window into the past when many lost their lives in a tragic Civil War.

References:

Drums Along the Antietam by John W. Schildt

Maryland A to Z: A Topographical Dictionary by Marion J. Kaminkow

Antietam -The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day by William A. Frassanito

The Evening Journal, December 20.1986 issue

The Maryland Theater
By:
Hilary Specht

Have you heard of a theater being saved by a fire? Something like that happened to the Maryland Theater... but first, a bit of background information. The Maryland Theater is located on South Potomac Street in Hagerstown. As you enter the Maryland Theater there is a small lobby. Then as you go in straight ahead are the main floor seats. To the left is the stairway that goes up to the balcony and restrooms. To the right and left on the main floor are other stairways that go up to the separate boxes. All of the latter are placed around the stage.

According to Joyce Hepner, the manager, the Maryland Theater was built in 1915, and on May tenth of that year the doors were opened. It took one year and $200,000 dollars to build this beautiful theater. The Potomac Realty Company, made up of Hagerstown businessmen, financed the building of the theater. They contracted Thomas W. Lamb, who designed Madison Square Garden and many other famous buildings around the world to do the work.

In its' early years the Maryland Theater was a Vaudeville house. Groups of performers like Will Rogers traveled on trains stopping from town to town performing their show in houses such as this. Since the trains came right up behind the building the loading door to the Maryland Theater is five feet high , the height of the train. It is too high for the trucks and buses that they use now, which causes a problem for many performing groups.

Theaters of the time were not built with large facilities for costume and set. This leads to the problem that there is little space for dressing rooms and for making sets in the theater. This is because the Vaudeville travelers only stayed a short time and brought everything with them that they needed. Some different acts for Vaudeville were juggling, silent movies, comedians and singers. Both as a Vaudeville House and in recent history many celebrities have performed on the Maryland Theater stage. Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Will Rogers, John Phillip Suasa, Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty, Johnny Cash and Pavlova have all entertained for appreciative audiences in this beautiful theater.

In 1930 RKO Warner bought the Maryland Theater. They turned it into one of their movie houses. When RKO Warner owned the building it fell into disrepair. The Maryland Theater had been painted several times, pink, green, and blue. The walls and ceilings were covered by cloth to gain the best sound projection and the roof was neglected. RKO Warner sold the theater when its' monopoly was broken. Later a couple of businessmen tried to restore it but to no avail. Finally it was left boarded up for many years until the fire in 1974. The fire was started when a circuit for the elevator in the lobby shorted. It was a five alarm fire that

only affected the lobby. If it had not been for the fire the theater probably would not have been restored and this might say that the fire caused the theater to be re-built!

In the early 1970's the people of Hagerstown started a group called Citizens to Save the Maryland Theater. It took 1.5 million dollars and two years to restore it. To build the theater now it would take a lot more time and money! The most expensive part to restore was the roof. The hardest to restore was the plaster ceiling: it was literally falling faster than they could pick it up. The water leakage and the cloth coverings had damaged the plaster so they had to build a scaffolding all the way to the ceiling to replace the plaster. In 1978 the Maryland Theater was reopened to the public. The first show was called a night of Vaudeville recreated.

The Maryland Theater is solely for the entertainment of the community. As a nonprofit organization it does not make extra money. The theater is run by a volunteer board of directors. They acquire money through fund raising: selling memberships, donations, and grants.

During these latter years there have been lots of reports of ghosts walking the stairs and making mischief, but perhaps that is just folklore.

The Maryland Theater during Vaudeville seated about 2,000 but, according to Joyce Hepner, people must have been smaller then because it only seats 1,400 today.

Since the people of Hagerstown have restored the theater it has held plays, musicals, symphonies, The Miss Maryland contest and served as a stage for high school productions.

The Maryland Theater has a very interesting history and now is very educational. The Maryland Theater is one of the wonderful assets to our county. We are very fortunate to have a piece of our history preserved.

References:

Joyce Hepner, manager of the Maryland Theater